

In considering the structure, management and general characteristics of my future classroom, I am delighted at the thought of having my own homeroom of unique and individual students. In order to capture their interest, to show them the relevance of the course material in their own lives, and to engage them in the learning process, I must display the enthusiasm that I feel for my subject content and for my role as their educator and facilitator. At this point in time, I hold various ideas about the classroom management techniques that I will employ in the classroom, based on my course work and my teaching experience. These ideas and concepts will change and evolve as I continually grow and learn as a teacher, in my constant pursuit of continuous professional development. All journeys begin with a single step, so I commence this portion of my career path with excitement and anticipation.

Firstly, I believe that students learn best when engaged in active learning. Nearly 2,500 years after the death of the Chinese philosopher Confucius, his words still ring true to this day. *I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.* From my own experience as a student in public school, what I remember best are those activities and projects in which I was actively involved, and those teachers who facilitated this experiential learning. Students must be able to see the relevance of the subject content in their own daily lives, and it must be presented in a way that is interesting, engaging and appropriate for their age and level of comprehension.

My role as a teacher is to educate, instruct and facilitate learning. I must also take the role of learner in order to develop new and more effective teaching methods, to discover and acquire the skills of other excellent educators, and to learn from mistakes made. It is the task of every teacher to find a means by which to challenge each individual student to perform to the best of his or her ability. By continuing with my own professional development, I hope to encourage my students to become lifelong learners and to set high personal standards of achievement.

With regard to the physical structure of my classroom, I wish to utilize the space as efficiently as possible. I will arrange student seating in a way that will most effectively allow students to work either individually or in groups. As I am a firm believer in project-based learning, there will be collaboration and discussion taking place in my classroom for much of the time, and the physical structure of the room will accommodate for this. The room must be brightly lit and well organized, according to the subjects being taught and the age group of the students. I will display student projects and artwork, in order to impart pride and ownership.

The classroom must be a place where students feel safe, not only to express their ideas and creativity, but safe from bullying and harm of any sort. I will strive to create a comfortable environment that facilitates learning, while reinforcing the importance of mutually respectful behaviour. I will also ensure the students' physical safety by familiarizing them with emergency exits and standard fire drill and lockdown procedures. The room itself will ideally be wheelchair accessible and equipped with any necessary facilities and additional learning resources for those students with special needs.

Regarding students with special needs and exceptionalities, I will work collaboratively with parents, resource teachers and other health professionals, in order to develop and carry out appropriate and effective special education plans. Aside from the academic aspect of education, I will also do my best to ensure that their emotional needs are met and that accommodations are made so they are included in all activities, to emphasize their value and importance in the class.

Every day, I aspire to arrive at school early enough to greet each of my students as they enter our classroom, engaging them in light conversation and establishing good rapport. I want them to know that I genuinely care about them and that they are important, not just as members of the larger class, but as individuals. As educators, we often have much more influence in our students' lives than we realize. For many, their relationship with us will be a major determining factor in whether their overall educational experience is positive or negative. Additionally, I must also keep in mind that I will never truly know what kinds of backgrounds or home situations my students are coming from, and I may be the most stable and dependable adult in some children's lives. Establishing trust and maintaining good communication with my students will be essential and mutually beneficial.

With regard to positive classroom management, it is my goal to increase appropriate behaviour and decrease undesirable behaviour. I hope to do this firstly by modeling affirmative behaviour, and secondly by upholding and encouraging positive actions. I also intend to do my best in being proactive rather than reactive. When a teacher is intuitive enough to notice or anticipate a potential behavioural issue before it takes place, it can often be resolved by responding in a timely and proactive manner. For example, moving toward and maintaining proximity to the student, touching him or her gently on the shoulder, making certain subtle gestures or establishing eye contact are all strategies that can halt an undesirable behaviour

before it escalates to misbehaviour. Although I realize it is an ongoing process to master these skills, I believe that being aware of them in the first place is the initial step in using them efficiently in the classroom.

I believe that rules, rituals and routines are of the utmost importance. They give a sense of structure and continuity, and they are particularly important with exceptional learners, who tend to require the stability and consistency of habitual activities. With regard to the former, I want my students to take an active role in helping me to establish classroom rules and suitable consequences for those who do not follow them. I want the standards to be clear, concise and encompassing of behaviours that are both acceptable and unacceptable, so there will be no confusion as to what kinds of behaviour are expected. In order for them to abide by the rules, students must have a very comprehensive understanding of what is unacceptable behaviour, and what the consequences of it will be. Consequences must be applied consistently in order to be effectual. They must fit the behaviour appropriately, and they must be utilized and carried out in a way that is effective and respectful to the student.

Regarding rituals, I hope to incorporate the First Nations practice of a talking circle into my classroom. Not only is this a great method for integrating Aboriginal culture and teachings, I have found it to be a very effective strategy for group conversations. I will begin by having the students arrange themselves in a circle. I will be holding a small object, such as a ball or beanbag, and I will explain to the students that only the holder of this object is allowed to talk within the circle. Others must wait until the object is passed to them in turn before they speak. This strategy can be used for general class discussions, as well as for problem resolution when there is a dispute between students and various points of view must be explained and considered.

I realize that, in order to be a successful teacher, I must also focus on my own needs. It will be important for me to have a sense of humour, to get plenty of sleep at night, to take risks and learn from my mistakes, to rely on the advice and assistance of expert teachers, and to learn as much as I can from my peers and my students. I must strive to always teach with the same enthusiasm and ambition that I hope to see and foster in my students. While I recognize that I still have much to learn regarding classroom management, I am committed to continuous self-reflection and improvement. I feel confident knowing that I am well on my way toward my destination of becoming a great teacher and having a positive impact on my students' lives.